

# MOVING FORWARD

News and information about the education of special  
needs students for teachers and parents

SPRING 2016

## COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

**Cognitive disability** is a term used when a person exhibits significant limitations in mental functioning and in skills such as communicating, processing information, taking care of him or herself, and social skills. These limitations will cause a child to learn and develop much more slowly than a typical child.



**Moderate cognitive disability:** Students with this type of disability have IQ scores between 40 and 55 and require intensive support that is typically in an alternative setting.

**Severe/profound cognitive disability:** Kids with severe cognitive disabilities have IQ scores that fall under 40 and require direct supervision

Cognition, or the process of thinking, is commonly measured by an intelligence test which generates an intelligence quotient or IQ for short. The range of a person's IQ suggests the level of capability, although there are many factors that can influence that number, such as motivation, language proficiency or exposure to learning.

An IQ is derived by measuring multiple areas such as communication, visual skills, comprehension, processing speed and memory. There are three levels of cognitive disability.

**Mild cognitive disability** - IQ scores between 55 and 70. These children are usually included in the general education classroom with additional academic support.

at all times. These children can have extensive medical needs as well that often require the school to follow a specific health plan.

There are many causes of cognitive disabilities. Most commonly, they are related to genetics, birth defects or complications, brain injury or dementia.

A cognitive deficit can significantly impact an individual's ability to perform everyday tasks. Regardless of their disabilities, schools work with all children on goals that will support their independence and help them become positive contributors to their communities.

The goal of this edition of the newsletter is to understand the many challenges and successes of educating cognitively disabled students.

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There is a plan and a purpose, a value  
to every life, no matter what its  
location, age, gender or disability.

Sharron Angle

# COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION (CBE)

There are several CBE programs throughout the school system that serve students with moderate to severe/profound disabilities. The CBE program seeks to educate students on the many facets of community living, with the aim of supporting maximum growth toward adult independence.



the community in an effort to practice the essential strategies and practical skills needed to survive as an independent adult.

Besides teachers and paraprofessionals, the typical CBE program has non-disabled mentors who model skills and behaviors every day. These peer tutors serve several purposes.

Besides teaching essential academic skills, a CBE program teaches functional skills. These are the daily living skills needed to navigate our world. This encompasses being able to communicate basic needs, understand signs, self-care, social skills, count money, use public transportation, and follow directions. These are just a few of the needs of students with cognitively disabilities that many people take for granted.

Disabled students often crave some level of acceptance from their peers as they learn to build healthy relationships. More importantly, peer mentors learn compassion and empathy by working with those who have so many challenges. This takes away a lot of the stigma and faulty perceptions about children with disabilities.

Students teaching students is a very effective model. Working together is a win-win situation, sometimes making it very hard to judge whether the disabled or nondisabled student learned more over the course of the semester.

Do you see me or my disability?

The students and staff in the secondary CBE programs actually go out into

Child  
Friend  
Student  
Citizen  
Ally  
Viewer  
Collector  
Advocate  
Fund raiser  
Employer  
Renter  
Co-worker  
Spouse  
Tax payer  
Sibling  
Donor  
Voter  
Dreamer  
In-law  
Constituent  
Contidant  
Hobbyist  
Customer  
Neighbor  
Leader  
Partner  
Perkasser  
Contributor  
Tenant  
Person  
Owner  
DO-er  
House  
mate  
Relative  
Ally



There is no greater disability in society than the inability to see a person as more.

Robert M. Hensel

## BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT

The Bridges to Employment program focuses on filling skills gap between high school to employment. Geared for students with mildly cognitive disabilities, this secondary program works on skills that are both functional and vocational. Job coaching, training, social stories and mock job situations are all a part of this program.

training, students can graduate to fill many entry-level positions in the community.

The curriculum of the Bridges to Employment program prepares a student for paid or unpaid employment. Students are taught the importance of attendance, communication, task completion, problem-solving and safety.

The key to this classroom is to match the needs of the community to the skills of the students. The more independent a student can become, the greater the chance of getting a job. With intensive supervision, coaching and



Having a job in the community improves self-confidence, independence and quality of life for young adults with cognitive disabilities. The need to belong to a community is what everyone, abled or disabled, strive for.

## DOWN SYNDROME: Some Facts & Resources

Down syndrome is a genetic disorder and the most common cause of cognitive impairment. One in approximately 700 babies in the U.S. is born with Down syndrome, and there are approximately 400,000 people currently living with Down syndrome in the U.S. Down syndrome occurs in all races and across all economic levels.



The actual cause of Down syndrome is still unknown. There is no scientific evidence that indicates that Down syndrome is caused by environmental factors or parents' activities before or during pregnancy. The only risk factor that has been identified to increase the chance for a child to be born with Down syndrome is maternal age. However, due to much higher birth rates in younger women, 80% of children with Down syndrome are born to women under the age of 35. At least 5% percent of Down syndrome cases are linked to the father.

In human beings, the nucleus of every one of our cells contains 23 pairs of chromosomes, half of which are inherited from each parent. Down syndrome occurs when an individual has a full or partial extra copy of chromosome #21. This extra chromosome creates a change in prenatal development, which in turn causes the characteristics associated with Down syndrome.

Each person with Down syndrome is a unique individual, and may have any or none of the characteristics associated with the disorder. Some of the physical traits of Down syndrome individuals can include low muscle tone, small stature, and an upward slant to the eyes.

All individuals with Down syndrome experience some cognitive delays, but the effect is usually mild to moderate, and does not take away from the many strengths and

talents that every individual possesses. Individuals with Down syndrome have an increased risk for certain medical conditions including congenital heart defects, respiratory difficulties, hearing problems, thyroid conditions, and childhood leukemia. However, many of these conditions are now treatable, and most people with Down syndrome lead healthy lives. With

recent medical advances, especially in the area of corrective heart surgeries, as many as 80% of adults with Down syndrome reach the age of 60, and many live even longer.

Children with Down syndrome are included in typical academic classrooms in schools across the U.S., often with full inclusion in social and educational settings. Increasingly, individuals with Down syndrome graduate from high school and participate in postsecondary academics and college programs. They take part in sports, music, art programs and any other community activities.

Adults with Down syndrome can be found working in many different fields, including the entertainment industry, clerical positions, retail, childcare, the sports field and the computer industry. Adults with Down syndrome are active participants in decisions that affect them, have meaningful relationships, marry, vote and contribute to society in many very positive and inspiring ways.

**SOURCE:** The National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) / [www.nds.org](http://www.nds.org)

### **RESOURCES**

National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS), NDSS Helpline 1-800-221-4602, [www.nds.org](http://www.nds.org)

**Local NDSS Affiliate:** Down Syndrome Association of Northwest Indiana & Chicagoland, [www.dsaofnwi.org](http://www.dsaofnwi.org)

## WHAT DOES "FUNCTIONAL SKILLS" MEAN?

Functional skills are all those basic abilities a student needs in order to manage everyday life. For those who have a mild cognitive disability, these skills may include learning to use a bus, counting money, knowing where to go for help, communication, social interactions and knowledge about safety.

**The ultimate goal of special education is some level of INDEPENDENCE!**



# INDIANA SUPPORT RESOURCES FOR COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

## Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation (DDRS) Website

<http://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs>

## DDRS Waiver Manual

<http://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/4312.htm>

**The ARC Indiana-** For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities [www.arcind.org/](http://www.arcind.org/)

**INSOURCE-**Resources for parents of disabled students

<http://insource.org/resources/links/indiana-organizations/>

## Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services (BDDS)

**Wait List Portal-**<http://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/4328.htm>

## Family and Social Services

<http://www.in.gov/fssa/dmha/index.htm>

## Two Waivers and Two Applications at BDDS Office

Family Support Waiver (FSW)

Home and community based services

Community Integration and Habilitation Waiver

Emergency need-based placement only

## LOCAL Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services

110 W. Ridge Road, Gary IN 46408-2709

(219) 981-5313 (West of the Glen Theater on Ridge Road)

TOLL FREE 877-218-3053



**CONGRATULATIONS**  
TO THE HAMMOND SCHOOLS  
WHO HOSTED A  
**DISABILITY AWARENESS EVENT!**

Children got an idea of what it would be like  
to have a disability through this innovative,  
hands-on program.

**GREAT JOB!**



## GOOD-BYE Ms. Penny!

The School City of Hammond Special Education Department would like to congratulate Penny Allen on her retirement and thank her for a job well done. After 40 years of working with

the disabled children for the School City of Hammond, she deserves time to explore the next chapter of her life.

She has helped countless students over the years with her boundless compassion and her knowledge of disabilities. She was a teacher to the teachers and a valuable resource for parents. Penny will now graduate to the “Community-Based Forever” program. The School City of Hammond family wishes her all the very best in her retirement.

**Moving Forward**

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